Principles of Organic Production and Handling
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1.1 Organic agriculture is an ecological production management system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity. It emphasizes the use of management practices in preference to the use of off-farm inputs, taking into account that regional conditions require locally adapted systems. These goals are met, where possible, through the use of cultural, biological, and mechanical methods, as opposed to using synthetic materials to fulfill specific functions within the system.

1.2 An organic production system is designed to:

- 1.2.1 Optimize soil biological activity;
- 1.2.2 Maintain long-term fertility;
- 1.2.3 Minimize soil erosion;
- 1.2.4 Maintain or enhance the genetic and biological diversity of the production system and its surroundings;
- 1.2.5 Utilize production methods and breeds or varieties that are well adapted to the region;
- 1.2.6 Provide livestock with optimal living conditions that promote their health and well being;
- 1.2.7 Recycle materials of plant and animal origin in order to return nutrients to the land, thus minimizing the use of non-renewable resources;
- 1.2.8 Minimize pollution of soil, water, and air; and
- 1.2.9 Become established on an existing farm or field through a period of conversion (transition), during which no prohibited materials are applied and an organic plan is implemented.

1.3 Organic handling practices are based on the following principles:

- 1.3.1 Organic processors and handlers implement organic good manufacturing and handling practices in order to maintain the integrity of organic products through all stages of processing, handling, transport, and storage;
- 1.3.2 Organic products are not commingled with non-organic products, except when combining organic and non-organic ingredients in finished products which contain less than 100% organic ingredients;
- 1.3.3 Organic products and packaging materials used for organic products do not come in contact with prohibited materials;
- 1.3.4 Proper records, including accurate audit trails, are kept to verify that the integrity of organic products is maintained;
- 1.3.5 Organic products are handled using processing methods that maintain the organic integrity and quality of the products; and
- 1.3.6 Organic processors and handlers use practices that minimize environmental degradation and consumption of non-renewable resources. Efforts are made to reduce packaging; use recycled materials; use cultural and biological pest management strategies; and minimize solid, liquid, and airborne emissions.

1.4 Organic products are defined by specific production and handling standards that are intrinsic to the identification and labeling of such products.

1.5 Organic standards require that each certified operator must complete, and submit for approval by a certifying agent, an organic plan detailing the management of the organic crop, livestock, wild harvest, processing, or handling system. The organic plan outlines the management practices and inputs that will be used by the operation to comply with organic standards.

1.6 Organic certification is a regulatory system which allows consumers to identify and reward operators who meet organic standards. It allows consumers to be confident that organic products are produced according to approved management plans in accordance with organic standards. Certification requires informed effort on the part of producers and handlers, and careful vigilance with consistent, transparent decision making on the part of certifying agents.

1.7 Organic production and handling operations must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and address food safety concerns adequately.

1.8 Organic certification, production, and handling systems serve to educate consumers regarding the source, quality, and content of organic foods and products. Product labels must be truthful regarding product names, claims, and content.

1.9 Genetic engineering (recombinant DNA technology) is a synthetic process designed to control nature at the molecular level, with the potential for unforeseen consequences. As such, it is not compatible with the principles of organic agriculture (either production or handling). Genetically engineered/modified organisms (GEO/GMO's) and products produced by or through the use of genetic engineering are prohibited.

1.10 Although organic standards prohibit the use of certain materials such as synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically engineered organisms, they cannot ensure that organic products are completely free of residues due to background levels in the environment.